

Fit to fight: Maintaining a balance

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"That is what we have to do to rebalance the Army – sustain, prepare, reset and transform. We must do that while we are at war, and it will not be easy, but it is essential to keep the Army the 'Strength of the Nation.'"

GEN George W. Casey, Chief of Staff of the Army

After nearly nine years of war, attaining and maintaining balance is one of the biggest challenges facing our Army today. We are in the midst of a persistent conflict, which is the third-longest in America's history and the longest ever fought by an all-volunteer force.

The Army Chief of Staff, GEN George W. Casey Jr., has a plan to put the Army back in balance, but it is going to take a few years to get there. To execute the chief of staff's plan, he has asked we focus on four areas: sustain, prepare, reset and transform – simultaneously – of course that in and of itself requires balance. Our Fires Force is one of the highest deployed forces in the U.S. Army, so we must understand and adapt to maintain balance.

Soldiers and leaders are the key to an Army that is defined as a "people" business. We can break equipment, we can lose contracts for a new weapon or computer, but we cannot operate without physically and mentally tough warfighters and families. The "total" or "whole" Soldier is one who maintains a good balance between his or her important tenants, such as family, community and mental, physical and spiritual fitness. This balance will enable the Soldiers to reach their full potential and recognize their greatest growth benefiting the Soldier, their family and our all important, all volunteer force's own sustainment.

Sustain. First and foremost, we want to ensure our people are well-cared for and have an opportunity to develop themselves whether they are at home, at work, on the battlefield or while serving in garrison. It is important our forces maintain a consistent, healthy lifestyle in mind, body and spirit, regardless of the situation in which they find themselves.

Our experiences at war have shown us we must better prepare our Fires Soldiers and their families to find their balance and to persevere with the challenges inherent to military service. With the start of Army initiatives such as the Army Family Covenant and the implementation of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program, we are on track to providing opportunities for our war fighting force community to excel and embrace the best of what military life has to offer. Additionally, the installation Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation offers a variety of activities to help our Soldiers and their families balance their lives through recreational, social and educational events – I encourage you to take advantage of all

of them.

The bottom line is that if we don't take care of ourselves, we won't be able to take care of each other, and every person, Soldier or civilian, is a vital link. This is the reason we are so successful, because without the support we give each other we cannot succeed. Therefore, as we build upon our successes, we owe our Soldiers the very best equipment and systems we can develop and cannot allow innovation to slip away. This is extremely important for our Fires Soldiers, especially after doing directed missions. As a Fires community we must enlist, access and retain the highest quality leaders. This will ensure we are able to address the complexities of persistent conflict now and in the future.

Prepare. As a Fires Force, we are ensuring both our field artillery and air defense artillery Soldiers have the right training and equipment to do their jobs. The Fires Center of Excellence is striving to integrate key aspects of the two branches, while aspiring for unprecedented offensive and defensive Fires capabilities. We have emerging missions now, and tremendous potential for synergy between the two branches in supporting the warfighter. How the branches and Fires Center of Excellence approach modernization to address these emerging missions will shape the Fires Center of Excellence and the Army as a whole for years to come. We must get back to doing some of our core competencies.

Time back from the fight assists training and learning in new and effective ways which are key to our future as an Army. On Dec. 17, 2009, the Army Capstone Concept was released and earlier in the month the Army Leader Development Program was signed. These documents are shaping our thoughts on the future fight, and how we transform from current learning models to new systems is of vital importance in terms of funds and time. This is not business as usual and it requires the combined knowledge and efforts of the entire Fires Force be captured as we move through the Army Force Generation cycle. Also, we must look across the entire doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities spectrum to address our needs.

Reset. Major combat and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are placing tremendous demands on our equipment. Amid the constant demands of war, the equipment is aging far more rapidly than projected. Because of the higher operating tempo, rough desert environments and limited maintenance available in theater, equipment life has been dramatically shortened.

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To maintain their operational effectiveness and to be prepared to deploy when needed, units must ensure their equipment is returned to optimal condition, or “reset,” after they redeploy from a combat or stability operation. Reset not only involves equipment; it involves our Soldiers and their family members. With the current strategic environment and a future of projected conflict, it is more important than ever to reset Soldiers, families and equipment properly.

New technologies and changing enemy tactics, techniques and procedures require new equipment, new systems and new ideas about how we fight and win. Reset is the time to capture those lessons learned and turn them into new tactics, techniques and procedures for the next deploying unit. Reset provides leaders time, although not enough in many cases, to look back and analyze what took place and why. For example, where were the capability gaps, where did our Soldiers miss a sign or piece of critical information that better training or a different way of training would have caught?

So along those notes, it is imperative every Fires professional strives to be a student of their trade and branch. In an information age, there are limitless opportunities to learn about what’s new, what’s happening in the Fires profession and to share what you know – don’t fire and forget – stay engaged. The Fires Center of Excellence (FCOE) is managing a series of social media applications to increase collaboration between the war fighter and the FCoE. From the Fires Knowledge Network to Facebook to the Combined Arms Center Blog, we need warriors’ input as to how our systems, training and education are working and how we are doing at supporting the families.

We must not only be schooled in the basics of our jobs, but we also must become adaptive leaders who are proficient in joint and combined expeditionary warfare, continuous full-spectrum operations, and leaders who are culturally astute and resilient to uncertain and ambiguous environments. Being a professional means more than gaining military occupational specialty skills, it also means taking advantage of outside college courses. That is why as leaders, we must provide every opportunity for our Soldiers to participate in civilian training and college education, avenues of self-development and experience to continue to achieve success in all areas.

Yes, we can and should teach ourselves and our Soldiers how to accomplish the mission by Army regulations, but these other types of experiences and education can give them the insight and the maturity to know when is appropriate to create other avenues of approach.

Transform. Critical for the success of Fires is the integration of the systems of the future while sustaining and upgrading our current weapons and enabling systems that support the current fight. In sync with bringing new systems online, we must have the capability to train more effectively and efficiently through the use of simulations and at combat training centers. This past year has seen several recently-fielded revolutionary munitions and systems, all of which enhance our ability as Fires professionals to integrate timely and effective lethal and nonlethal fires in support of the joint and combined maneuver commander. No single platform, including vehicles, operates alone. As a result, Army modernization will be undertaken while maintaining equipment of various classes and ages – a constant mix of upgraded legacy systems and new platforms.

Wars now and in the future will almost certainly involve joint and combined operations. We can see this in Afghanistan today where the U.S. Army is not fighting alone. Joint and combined operations have become the norm. The Fires Center of Excellence continually looks for opportunities to bring joint and combined training here because it exposes our Soldiers, and the leaders we are developing, to the operational environment they will be exposed to in the real fight.

This was certainly the case with hosting Forging Sabre 2009. Because Fort Sill is the home of the Fires Center of Excellence and the Field Artillery School, a Singaporean air force contingent traveled to Fort Sill to validate their training with a live-fire exercise, which incorporated both U.S. and Singaporean forces. It made sense for these new High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System soldiers and airmen to validate their training with the U.S. Army’s fires experts because Fort Sill has the best joint and combined Fires training capabilities available. It also gives our Fires Soldiers valuable experience training in a combined environment. It was a win-win for both countries, and is the first of several historical training opportunities to be held here at the Fires Center of Excellence.

It’s important to note, transformation won’t stop with incorporating joint and combined fighting opportunities. Transformation is accelerating at an all-time fevered pitch and has a new emphasis on homeland security and force protection to include preparing for hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare is no longer a concept of the future, and we will continue to see conflict with blended or mixed warfare including conventional, guerrilla, counterinsurgency and terrorism. Hybrid warfare constantly shifts along the conflict continuum and will demand more dual-use and multi-role platforms. Hybrid conflict will also require new and creative approaches to operational problems, including the need for leaders to consider the formation of ad hoc, modular composite units where elements from other units could be attached depending on the particular mission.

That’s why we are revamping all our courses and incorporating the idea of a Joint Combined Fires University, where it supports the pillars of a “university” as we define it, such as “education, research and development, currency and outreach” – to respond to this new way of fighting.

Hence the 2010 January-February edition of the *Fires Bulletin* is dedicated to “maintaining a balance in an era of persistent conflict.” Throughout this issue of the *Fires Bulletin*, authors discuss “maintaining balance” and touch on each area of the CSA’s imperatives. *Sustain* focuses on the upkeep of our all-volunteer force. *Prepare* spotlights pre-deployment training. *Reset* brushes on the re-integration and dealing with our “in-ranks” enemy, suicide. Lastly, a look at *transform* as it touches on new tactics, techniques and procedures and new systems. The collection of articles contained in this edition highlights some of the best ideas and new ideologies in the Fires profession. It is a preverbal “how to” guide of what it takes to maintain a balance in an ever-changing era of persistent conflict.

It has never been a more exciting time to be a Fires professional. So as we go about sustaining, preparing, resetting and transforming – we all must be involved and we all must share our combined wisdom.

Fit to Fight – Fires Strong!